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ABSTRACT

Objective news reporting, in which reporters present but do not evaluate facts, has certain negative consequences. When the convention of journalistic objectivity was adopted around 1900, journalists moved from interpreting and analyzing events to being relatively passive links between sources and audiences. The most troublesome convention of objective reporting for the consumer appears to be the presentation of conflicting truth claims. A 1977 series of articles in the Hartford, Connecticut, "Courant" presented conflicting claims about a Hartford map designating much of the city as "inappropriate" for residence, which was allegedly distributed by a realtor to airlines employees who were being transferred to Hartford. The articles included accusations by civil rights leaders that the maps were designed to steer people away from areas populated by blacks, denials by airlines and realty officials that they had distributed the map, and reactions by public officials. The truth about the facts was never made known, and readers had no way of discriminating among the contradictory claims. While news ought to reflect thoughtful scrutiny, or at least a concern for the probable truth of claims, its form makes this impossible. Moreover, the public debate accommodated in the press is limited to the views of officialdom. (Six "Courant" news stories about the map controversy are included.) (GW)

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THE CONSEQUENCES OF OBJECTIVE REPORTING: THE CASE OF "REDLINING" IN HARTFORD

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THE CONSEQUENCES OF OBJECTIVE REPORTING:
THE CASE OF "REDLINING" IN HARTFORD

While it is now commonplace to pay homage to its liabilities and imperfections, objectivity in journalism is as pervasive today as it was several decades ago when Oliver Bovard, managing editor of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, confided to a fellow editor that he was at a loss to justify the many falsehoods that continued to make their way into the paper. "Here is a lie," Bovard lamented, pointing to a story on page one. "I know it is a lie, but I must print it because it was spoken by a prominent public official" (Mott, 1952: 85). To be sure, for well over a half century, journalists have been admonished to be morally disengaged; to pass judgment on the "cold facts" has long been considered an impropriety, a transgression only the editorial writer is permitted.

But is it right for journalists to let the "facts" speak for themselves? Is it good for journalists to remain neutral about the events, issues, and personalities they have been assigned to cover? Is objective reporting socially desirable? These are but a few of the questions about objectivity that journalists and their critics have been grappling with, and they serve well to introduce the problem we propose to examine in this paper. For what concerns us here are the consequences of objective reporting -- the consequences for the hundreds of imaginative journalists for whom journalism is something more than "selection" and "translation," and more importantly the consequences for the millions of Americans who expect their news media to provide on a daily basis the kind of vital information they need to participate fully in, and adjust successfully to, an increasingly complex society.

To provide a framework for our subsequent analysis and critique, we offer at the outset a brief discussion on the origins and practices of objective reporting. Following Tuchman (1972), we depict objective reporting as a set of compulsive, routine procedures through which reporting is "objectified."[1]

Of the four "procedures" Tuchman identifies we focus on one: the presentation of conflicting truth-claims. To fully explicate this particular aspect of objective reporting we offer an analysis of a series of articles from the Hartford Courant. Drawing on this analysis we argue that, broadly conceived, objectivity in journalism has done little to promote a correspondence between, as Walter Lippmann (1965) once put it, the "world outside" and the "pictures in our heads"; specifically, we argue that the practice of presenting conflicting "facts" is inimical to the journalist's quest for truth. Finally, in a more polemical mood, we suggest that objective reporting has given rise to an occupational ideology that has effectively undermined the role of the press in a democracy.

The Genesis of Objectivity In Journalism

Principally, there were two reasons for the advent of objective reporting, an idea that came into vogue around the turn of the century. First, publishers found it financially unwise to offend their readers (who often happened to be advertisers) with partisan views and fiery prose. The archetypical publisher in this instance was probably Adolph Ochs, whose New York Times adopted as its credo in 1896 an unprecedented pledge: "To give the news impartially without fear or favor, regardless of any party, sect or interest involved." The other reason had to do with the emergence of news gathering cooperatives, most notably the Associated Press. Since these organizations had to service newspapers with diverse and often incompatible editorial policies, the news reports they distributed were necessarily limited to the "bare facts," with the opportunity for interpretation or analysis reserved for the individual client.[2]

Objectivity in journalism emerged not as a standard, however, but as a convention, the kind of organizational imperative to which Lippmann (1965: 223) referred when he called attention to the capricious and largely irrational

enterprise of "newsmaking":

> Every newspaper...is the result of a whole series of selections as to what items shall be printed, in what position they shall be printed, how much space each shall occupy, what emphasis each shall have. There are no objective standards here. There are only conventions.

Typically, the conventions of journalism are a product of uncritical consensus formation; they are arrived at by tacit agreement, an "understanding" among journalists, an entente cordiale that invariably precludes any opportunity for sustained analysis or criticism. Thus, by their very nature, these "habits of mind" evade conscious scrutiny and defy rational justification; they are, Sigal (1973: 3) concludes,"...just the way things are done around the newsroom." Conventions, therefore, do not provide a disciplined frame of reference for the journalist, a critical perspective from which reporters and editors might assess the quality of their performance or the value of their work. Instead, conventions provide routines: in the face of uncertainty journalists need to know "how to proceed," and conventions -- to the extent that they routinize newsmaking -- provide the necessary stability and decorum.[3]

Objective Reporting: Its Post Hoc Rationale

The peculiar thing about conventions is that their present existence is often wholly unrelated to their origins. "Although most conventions are rooted in earlier economic organization of the newspaper industry," Sigal (1973: 75) observes, "some persist long after that organization has changed." In part, conventions endure because they continue to provide the basis for consensus, and in part they endure because new and more agreeable "reasons" for their existence have been devised -- a kind of post hoc rationale, a justification imposed retroactively on conventions that have long since lost their legitimacy. Essentially, this is what happened with the notion of objectivity in journalism: though objective reporting was, originally, as much a commercial imperative as anything else, it wasn't long before it evolved into a profes-

sional ethic, soon to become axiomatic to a "free and responsible" press.

As early as 1924 Nelson Crawford, in his text on journalism ethics, expressly assumed that at least theoretically, if not operationally, everyone agreed with the basic tehents of objective reporting. Clearly, for Crawford (who devoted three full chapters to the principles of objectivity) and for those who held similar sympathies, objectivity was the "right" way of doing reporting, an ideal subordinate to only Truth itself. Indeed, by 1954 Louis Lyons, then Curator for the Nieman Fellowship program at Harvard, was describing objectivity as a "rock-bottom" imperative. "Objectivity is the ultimate discipline of journalism. It is at the bottom of all sound reporting -- indispensible as the core of the writer's capacity, of his integrity" (Lyons, 1965: 295). And in November 1973 the 30,000 members of the Society for Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, formally enshrined the idea of objectivity when they adopted as part of their "Code of Ethics" a paragraph characterizing objective reporting as an attainable goal and a standard of performance toward which journalists should strive. "We honor those who achieve it," the Society proclaimed. In short, with the aid of journalism educators and the curricula they developed for schools and departments of journalism, journalists had, as Carey (1969: 33) puts it, rationalized objectivity into "...a canon of professional competence and an ideology of professional responsibility."

The Journalist As Professional Communicator

As the canons of objective reporting became more widespread, journalists were forced to relinguish their role as interpreter and analyst and became instead what Carey describes as a "professional communicator," a relatively passive link between sources and audiences:

> With the rise of 'objective reporting' in the latter half of the 19th century, the journalist went through a process that can be fairly termed a 'conversion downwards,' a process whereby a role is deintellectualised

> and technicalised. Rather than an independent interpreter of events, the journalist became a reporter, a broker in symbols who mediated between audiences and institutions, particularly but not exclusively government. In this role he loses his independence and becomes part of the process of news transmission. In this role he does not principally utilise an intellectual skill as critic, interpreter and contemporary historian but a technical skill at writing, a capacity to translate the specialised language and purposes of government, science, art, medicine, finance into an idiom that can be understood by broader, more amorphous, less educated audiences (32).

As impartial observers journalists had neither the need nor the opportunity to develop a critical perspective from which to assess the events, issues, and personalities they were assigned to cover. As mere technicians it was no longer necessary to maintain a familiarity with the important social phenomena of the day, or even a reasonable understanding of what was being said about these phenomena. Decidedly, the journalist as professional communicator was a generalist, an unusually eclectic breed of amanuensis. For unlike the journalist as independent critic, the journalist as professional communicator required no expertise beyond a mastery of the prevailing journalistic style of exposition.

To compensate for their lack of expertise, journalists began to rely more heavily on their sources. Their skill as interviewers became considerably more important than their ability to induce or otherwise engage in rational conjecture. In one of the earliest studies of its kind, for example, Rosten (1937) found that a "pronounced majority" of the Washington correspondents he surveyed -- presumed to be the most competent group of journalists in the country -- often considered themselves inadequate to cope with the bewildering complexities of our nation's policies and politics. They were, as Rosten described them, an exasperated lot whose impressionistic approach to reporting denied any systematization of Washington's "hectic cosmos." More to the point, what Rosten found was cynicism and condescension, a beguiled and frustrated corps of prominent journalists more or less resigned to their

role as glorified stenographers. "To do the job, what you know or understand isn't important. You've got to know whom to ask," explained one Washington reporter. Even if you don't understand what's being said, Rosten was told, just take careful notes and write it up verbatim. "Let my readers figure it out. I'm their reporter, not their teacher" (132). Nearly forty years later, in his study of the New York Times and the Washington Post, Sigal (1973: 69) reached essentially the same conclusion:

> Even when he is in a position to observe an event directly, he remains reluctant to offer interpretations of his own overtly, preferring instead to rely on his news sources. For the reporter, in short, most news is not what has happened, but what someone says has happened....

In sum, sources have come to supply the sense and substance of the stories journalists tell. Sources supply the arguments, the rebutals, the explanations, and the criticism; sources put forth the ideas while other sources challenge those ideas. Reporters, in their role as professional communicators, merely provide a vehicle for these exchanges, a practice, Sigal found, inextricably bound up with the conventions of objective reporting.

Objective Reporting Operationally Defined

Operationally, objective reporting is, as Tuchman (1972) discerned, at once both a strategy and a ritual. The conventions of objectivity -- Tuchman identified four[5] -- can be thought of as a strategy in that they are a device intended to protect journalists from the risks of their trade, a tactic used to anticipate and deflect criticism. "Attacked for a controversial presentation of 'facts,' newspapermen invoke their objectivity almost the way a Mediterranean peasant might wear a clove of garlic around his neck to ward off evil spirits" (660). As a ritual these same conventions become a set of largely compulsive routine procedures which usually have "...relatively little or only tangential relevance to the end sought" (661). Taken together, Tuchman's description of objectivity as a "strategic ritual" yields an operational

definition of objective reporting, an understanding of what journalists must do to justify a news story as "objective."

Of the four conventions Tuchman identified, the presentation of conflicting truth-claims would appear to be the most troublesome for the consumer. For when a news story includes contradictory "facts," the unfortunate implication is that the reader, not the reporter, ought to decide what is correct and what is in error. That is, with the rise of objective reporting the responsibility for judging the authenticity of news -- including the responsibility for judging the facts in evidence -- had shifted from the journalist to the consumer, with no apparent concern for the consumer's willingness or ability to accept this responsibility.

That most consumers cannot or will not accept this responsibility, however, became painfully clear in the early 1950s during the news media's coverage of Senator Joe McCarthy's insidious campaign to rid the nation of "communists" and "communist sympathizers."[6]

Facts and Falsehoods

Given McCarthy's prominence, and given the magnitude of his allegations, most journalists agreed that what McCarthy had to say was newsworthy. And since objectivity called for reporting only what was said without judging the substance of what was said, most journalists felt they had little choice but to dutifully -- albeit uncritically -- report McCarthy's malicious and unfounded accusations. Simply put, journalists regarded McCarthy's allegations as newsworthy even if they had good reason to believe his allegations were untrue; formally stated, journalists regarded the statement "X said A" as a "fact" even if "A" was false (Tuchman, 1972: 665), the folly of which the Commission on Freedom of the Press warned against only a few years earlier when they cautioned journalists about the important and often neglected distinction between reporting the facts truthfully and reporting the truth about the facts (Leigh, 1947: 22).

Often, if a "fact" was in controversy (as was frequently the case with McCarthy), journalists would attempt to place their groundless credulity "in perspective" by reporting additional "facts," usually counter-charges or denials. Thus, under the guise of fairness, and in an effort to further objectify their stories, journalists would report several related, though conflicting, "facts-in-controversy," as though balance was an adequate substitute for validity. An objective news story, therefore, could conceivably include several contradictory statements in the form "X said A," with none of the internal "facts" ("A") having been confirmed or denied by the reporter; ergo, the convention of presenting conflicting truth-claims.

Objective Reporting At the Hartford Courant

Like most urban centers, the city of Hartford has been concerned with the problem of "redlining," a subtle effort on the part of the real estate industry and others to alert prospective residents to "desirable" or "compatible" neighborhoods. Usually, redlining involves the delineation of a geographic area in terms of its economic worth or potential. But, critics charge, since economically deprived areas are more often than not inhabited by minorities, redlining may have serious racial implications. In effect, redlining may be a form of racial steering, since it inhibits the mobility of minority groups and, by so doing, serves to preserve a racially segregated society.

The problem of redlining in Hartford intensified in February 1977 when the Hartford Courant "learned" and subsequently published a series of six stories (see appendix) about maps having been distributed to American Airlines employees, who were being transferred to Hartford to work in a new reservation center. The maps, the Courant reported, were an outline of Hartford with most of the inner city described as "inappropriate." Across the town line, however, the words "good for consideration" were written. The lead paragraph in the

first story read:

> Maps indicating that most of the city of Hartford is unsuitable for residence have been sent to some of the more than 450 American Airlines employees being transferred here, the Courant has learned.

As in most controversies depicted by the press, the Courant's sources fell into one of three camps: protagonists, antagonists, and "reactors," in this case a handful of city officials called upon to "react" to the controversy. Typically, the protagonists made the accusations and were responsible for bringing the controversy to the Courant's attention. The antagonists, in turn, denied the charges and generally disavowed their role as antagonists. And the reactors, appropriately, reacted.

The principal protagonists included officials from the Urban League of Greater Hartford and a research associate from Education/Instruction, Inc., a Hartford civil rights organization. The principal antagonists included a spokesman for American Airlines, the executive vice president of the Greater Hartford Board of Realtors, and a representative from Ticor, Inc., a White Plains, New York firm hired by American Airlines to help its employees relocate in Hartford. The principal reactor was Hartford's city manager.

Now since the protagonists were intent on bringing the controversy to the public's attention, they were unusually cooperative sources; though at times unsolicited, their quotes were specific and their allegations damning. The antagonists, however, were necessarily uncooperative sources, at least to the extent that they were not interested in seeing the controversy brought to light; in fact, the antagonists repeatedly denied that there even was a controversy. But it was the reactors who played the most precarious role. Should a controversy arise within their "jurisdiction," reactors can be counted on for an immediate, if not quite candid, statement; they are, characteristically, dependable sources. Moreover, since reactors are invariably leaders, officials, or experts of one kind or another, the mere fact that they

have reacted to a controversy tends to confer status on the controversy; unwittingly but inevitably, their reactions function to legitimate the protagonist's version.[7]

The Courant used these sources to present the redlining controversy in what has come to be the "standard" journalistic form of narrative: a disjointed and decontextualized juxtaposition of direct and indirect quotations. The reporter's traditional role as story teller was, therefore, transformed into something more technical than literary; sources themselves supplied the substance of the story, while the reporter's contribution was reduced to writing transitions and an occasional paragraph of background information. From this perspective a "good" reporter is one who leaves no personal imprint on the story, and a "good" story is one that reveals little or nothing about the writer. Strictly speaking, the story of redlining in Hartford was not told by but rather through the Courant's reporters, a technique that involved little more than interposing attributed statements.

The Interposition of Attributed Statements

From among the dozens of attributed statements the Courant reporters juxtaposed, four distinct categories emerge: (i) accusation statements, (ii) denial statements, (iii) indignation statements, and (iv) resolution statements (see Figure 1). Typically, the protagonists introduced or elaborated on the controversy through accusation statements, while the antagonists disavowed or disputed the controversy through denial statements. Combined, accusation statements and denial statements accounted for the conflicting truth-claims. The remaining two types of statements were generally issued in response to these truth-claims. Indignation statements were expressions of disgust or aversion; both protagonists and antagonists used indignation statements to enhance their respective truth-claims. At times, reactors too, became indignant, in which case they lost their presumed neutrality and assumed the role of protagonist or antagonist, depending on the tenor of their indignation statement.

FIGURE 1

TYPOLOGY OF ATTRIBUTED STATEMENTS

STATEMENT	SOURCE	EXAMPLE
Accusation Statement	Protagonist	"The map is clear evidence of racial steering and the real estate industry's literal 'red-lining' of Hartford as a whole" (story 1, para. 6).
Denial Statement	Antagonist	"No way did we alter any maps. Whether they are our maps or whether somebody took them and altered them, I don't know, but we didn't do it" (story 2, para. 14).
Indignation Statement	Protagonist Antagonist Reactor	"As initially shocked as I am, I'm not surprised. It points to business as usual...This is 99 per cent of the way the whole thing (marketing real estate) is done" (story 2, para. 17).
Resolution Statement	Protagonist Antagonist Reactor	Daken said he will ask American Airlines, in a memo, to involve itself in finding out who marked and sent out the map" (story 3, para. 9).

For example, Hartford's city council majority leader became part protagonist when he said, "If someone is steering people away from Hartford, that's outrageous" (first story, ninth paragraph). Finally, resolution statements were issued by protagonists, antagonists, or reactors in an effort to bring about some kind of compromise, reconciliation, or solution.

Now obviously these four types of statements were not randomly interposed, especially toward the beginning of the story. Instead, the Courant's stories were organized according to what journalism texts call the "inverted pyramid," or what Weaver (1972: 37) more appropriately describes as the "principle of magnitude". That is, at the outset the reporter decided which statement -- or at least which type of statement -- was most newsworthy, a choice that became manifest not only as the story's lead but as the story's focus or theme as well. The remaining statements were then arranged in descending order of importance -- a sort of hierarchy of newsworthiness. Organizationally, then, each of the Courant's stories tended to constrict the reader's attention to one particular truth-claim. Or as Galtung and Ruge (1970: 270) proposed in their "distortion hypothesis," once a news item has been selected, what makes it newsworthy will be accentuated.

Having been assembled according to the principle of magnitude, the story then went to an editor, who decided how newsworthy it was in comparison to the other stories received that day. Just as truth-claims are endowed with the property of relative magnitude, so too are news stories. Accordingly, of the six stories under examination, the first story -- which centered on the protagonists' truth-claims (accusation statements) -- was deemed worthy of page one. The fifth story, however, which focused on the antagonists' denials, was relegated to page seventeen. In short, journalists were able to signify the relative importance of a truth-claim in two fundamental ways: first by deciding the story's focus, and second by deciding the story's placement in

the newspaper.

But signifying the importance of a truth-claim is not to be construed as endorsing the claim or attesting to its validity. Simply stated, as Phillips (1977: 70) found in her study of objectivity, "Objective reporting obviates the need for journalists to choose between conflicting truth claims." In the first story, for example, officials from the Urban League charged that maps had been sent out in an effort to redline Hartford; American Airlines and Ticor, Inc. were implicated. However, in the fifth story -- published 21 days after the first story appeared -- Ticor officials, after completing an investigation on their own, categorically and convincingly denied the accusations. Only <u>one</u> map was sent out, Ticor explained, and that was in response to the "expressed needs" of an American Airlines employee. Moreover, as Ticor argued in the concluding paragraph of the sixth story, since the one employee who received the map was black, and since the areas marked "good for consideration" were predominantly white, use of the map would have promoted, not stifled, racial integration.

Thus, if Ticor's explanation was valid, then there was not redlining controversy involving American irlines and Ticor, Inc. Indeed, the controversy existed for nearly a month <u>only</u> in the "pictures" in the <u>Courant's</u> readers' heads, and not in the "world outside." To be sure, if only one map was distributed, then American Airlines and Ticor were unnecessarily maligned by the <u>Courant's</u> willingness to provide space for allegations that were false and perhaps defamatory.

Conversly, if Ticor's explanation was invalid, if Ticor had merely told a convincing lie, then the <u>Courant's</u> readers may have been misled to believe the controversy had been resolved or that it really didn't exist.

Unhappily, either scenario is a possibility, for the "truth about the facts" had never been made known. Instead, the <u>Courant</u> chose to dichotomize

its sources, thereby enhancing, if not actually creating, the very conflict on which its reportage focused. By portraying its sources as adversaries -- the black community on the one side and American Airlines on the other -- the Courant literally created the most salient attribute of its coverage. In principle, it matters little whether the controversy was real or contrived; what does matter, though, is that the Courant's readers, not its reporters, were expected to discriminate among the dozens of published, contradictory truth-claims.

Objectivity In Journalism: Its Consequences

As evidenced by our analysis of the Hartford Courant's portrayal of the redlining controversy, journalists have become mediators rather than inquirers; their reporting has ceased to be an intellectual activity, and the stories they tell can no longer be thought of as original compositions. Whereas reporters once aspired to be"messengers of truth," they have now settled for something less grandiose, what columnist Pete Hamill calls "clerks of facts." Clearly, what the Courant exemplifies is a fundamental departure from a time when journalism was conceived as a literary genre and not, as Carey (1969: 32) reminds us, a species of technical writing. "Journalism was not characterised merely as reporting which put words and actions of others into simpler language, but as a fluid interpretation of actions and actors, an effort to create a semantic reality that invested the ordinary with significance."

Under the guise of objectivity, the Courant's reporters portrayed the redlining controversy not as it existed but as they were told it existed. In their role as professional communicators they were unable to reconcile the conflicting truth-claims they reported and thus they were unable to confirm or deny the validity of what they were told. Briefly and harshly, at no time did the reporters at the Courant engage in any form of social inquiry.

News and Questions of Conscience

Just as objectivity in journalism brought about changes in the role of the reporter, the news, too, metamorphosed into something very different. Following Weaver (1972), objective reporting had transformed the modern day news story into a kind of epideictic rhetoric, the least appealing of the three principal modes of public discourse identified by Aristotle in the Rhetoric.

> Deliberative discourse, deliberative rhetoric, is the quintessentially political rhetoric. Its subject matter is the relative advantages and disadvantages of alternative ways of dealing with public problems; its focus is on what will happen in the future; its concern is thus with cause and effect and cost and benefit. And its method, its particular device of analysis and discourse, is the example.
>
> Forensic discourse is the kind of discourse you find in courts of law. It has to do with establishing what happened in the past, whether someone is or is not guilty of having performed a certain action that fell under a certain category. Its concern is historical; its method is the enthymeme, or imperfect syllogism; and its aim is to establish true or at least probably true facts and to classify those facts under the law.
>
> Epideictic speech is speech whose purpose is to praise or blame, and its method is amplification. You amplify or emphasize facts that speak well of a man or thing or institution, or else you magnify facts that speak ill of him; and it is by amplification that you praise or blame persuasively (Weaver, 1972: 38).

As the Courant's reportage clearly indicates, objective newswriting calls for the interposition of truth-claims, with an emphasis or focus on one particular truth-claim -- ergo, distortion through amplification. Accordingly, the news story most closely resembles the epideictic mode, which calls for amplification through the juxtaposition of blame and praise. Moreover, the expository style journalists use tends to decontextualize facts, which is in itself an organizing principle inimical to the organization of either deliberative or forensic discourse. Thus, while news ought to reflect the thorough and thoughtful scrutiny that distinguishes the deliberative mode, or at least the concern for probabilities that characterizes the forensic mode, its form

makes this virtually impossible. To be sure, not only does the news story's form inhibit the sort of public discourse in which the press ought to be engaged, but its form is primarily responsible for what Weaver (1972: 37) describes as the major vices and shortcomings of contemporary American journalism. "the simplistic, moralistic perspective of the world, the pose of vociferous infallibility, the sense of populist righteousness, the disinterest in the ambiguities and complexities of policy making."

Though journalists are expected to be morally disengaged, the very form of the news story, it follows, demands judges, not neutral observers. For in practice, the Courant's reporters decided who would be blamed and who would be praised, who would be disgraced and who would be honored, who would be accused and who would be exonerated. Prodigiously, journalists decide which truths will prevail and which truths will be neglected -- though, curiously, only under extraordinary circumstances will journalists decide which truths are true. The news story's form, in other words, is most amenable to what Bethell (1977: 35) calls "questions of conscience"; other questions -- especially questions of truth of validity -- are either ignored or at best afforded "equal treatment." There is, therefore, a propensity among journalists for conflicts and confrontations that have moral or ethical overtones. Understandably, the press thrives on stories like Hartford's redlining controversy because, as Bethell puts it, "... the mechanics of confrontation tend to confirm the press in its pose as the custodian of conscience."

Thus, Weaver reasons, as a special type of knowledge, as a mode of discourse with its own distinctive rules, news is essentially a moralizing form. It is moralizing form in that it requires journalists to consider not the validity of what they report but only its propriety.

Objectivity and the Ideology of News

Journalists are likely to feign impartiality and their stories may appear to

be unbiased and value-free, but unavoidably the routines of objective reporting have brought about an occupational ideology, an ideology that favors leaders and officials, the prominent and the elite, the "managers of the status quo." As professional communicators journalists have come to rely most heavily on "legitimated sources," public officials and public figures whose very credibility rests on their position or status (i.e., publicity) in society. In short, objective reporting not only excludes questions of validity, but more insidiously it favors what sociologist Alvin Gouldner (1976) calls "official accounts" of "what is," representations of reality that are necessarily conservative and self-serving.

Moreover, the kind of public debate the press is willing to accommodate is likewise limited to the views and opinions of officialdom, which effectively inhibits the sort of rational public discourse in which a democratic press ought to be engaged. Not only do the prominent and the elite provide the "facts" for the stories journalists tell, but they are also the sole source of opinion about what these facts mean. As was the case with the Hartford Courant, officials introduced the controversy, officials denied the controversy, and officials "reacted to" the controversy.

It is a fundamental truism that popular debate depends on separating individuals from their powers and privileges in the larger society; for as Gouldner (1976: 98) reminds us, if such powers and privileges are not defined as irrelevant to the quality of discourse, then debate itself becomes a source of societal domination. Clearly, then, objectivity in journalism runs counter to the needs of a democracy, since it affords greater freedom of expression to those who have power and status. Inevitably, objective reporting stifles dialogue and undermines the kind of robust debate the press is intended to protect.

Notes

1 Tuchman's view of objective reporting is strictly operational; her study does little to reveal what objectivity means conceptually or connotatively.

2 For a more detailed discussion on the origins of objective reporting, see Carey (1969), Sigal (1973), and Roshco (1975).

3 On this point, see Tuchman (1973).

4 It is arguable whether "objective" refers to the product (the news story) or the process (methods of reporting). The two competing schools of thought on this question are best represented by Roshco (1975: 55), who argues that "Objectivity resides not in the quality of the product but in the mode of the performance," and Hemenus (1976: 106), who argues that an objective product is not entirely dependent on an objective process: "It is, in practice, possible to write objective news in a newspaper in spite of non-objective processes at the stage of producing the news."

5 Tuchman (1972: 665-671) outlines four conventions of objectivity: (i) Presentation of conflicting possibilities --"...by pairing truth-claims or printing them as they occur on sequential days, the newsmen claim 'objectivity.'" (ii) Presentation of supporting evidence --" ...one evening the assistant managing editor asked for 'more objective obits' after reading an obituary which described the deceased as a 'master musician,' He asked, 'How do we know' the deceased was a 'master musician' as opposed to a 'two-bit musician' playing with the town band? He was told that, several paragraphs into the story, one learns that the deceased had played with John Philip Sousa. The additional 'fact,' the editor agreed, justified the term 'master musician.'" (iii) The judicious use of quotation marks -- "By interjecting someone else's opinion, they (reporters) believe they are removing themselves from participation in the story, and they are letting the 'facts' speak..." (iv) Structuring information in an appropriate sequence -- "Structuring information is an appropriate sequence is also a procedure to denote objectivity which is exemplified as a formal attribute of news stories. The most important information concerning an event is supposed to be presented in the first paragraph, and each succeding paragraph should contain information of decreasing importance."

6 For an interesting study of McCarthy, see Rovere (1959); for an analysis of McCarthy and the press, see Davis (1952).

7 For a discussion on the role of "reactors," see Bethell (1975).

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STORY NO. 1

MAP SHOWS CITY HAS FEW LIVING PLACES

By J. Greg Robertson

Maps indicating that most of the city of Hartford is unsuitable for residence have been sent to some of the more than 450 American Airlines employees being transferred here, the Courant has learned.

One copy of the map was turned over to the Urban League of Greater Hartford this week by an American Airlines employee who included the explanation that it was mailed by Ticor Inc., a White Plains, N.Y. firm under contract to sell the houses of airline employees who will work in the reservations center in the former Korvette building on Main Street.

Ticor officials have been invited to attend an 11 a.m. meeting today with city and Urban League officials. The meeting will be held at the Urban League offices, 1229 Albany Ave., according to Walter "Doc" Hurley, housing committee chairman of the League.

An American Airlines spokesman, Vincent Mudugno, said Friday, American knows nothing of the map. He also said he talked to Ticor officials Friday and said they denied knowledge of the maps. Ticor officials could not be reached Friday for direct comment.

The map, three copies of which have reportedly been seen by Urban League officials, is described as an outline of the City of Hartford with Farmington Avenue indicated across the center and a hand-written "No" circled above the avenue in the center of north Hartford. The south half of Hartford is bisected east to west with a dotted line. Above the line is written "Downtown not considered appropriate". Across the Hartford town line, on the West Hartford and Wethersfield sides is written "Good for consideration".

Education/Instruction, a Hartford civil rights organization, protested the map in a letter to City Manager James B. Daken. "The map is clear evidence of racial steering and the real estate industry's literal 'red-lining' of Hartford as a whole", wrote E/I research associate Patrick H. Hare Friday.

He asked Daken to begin a full investigation of Ticor's practices "with the stated intent of suing for violation of the Fair Housing Act if additional evidence of racial steering is found." He also asked the city to "insist" that American recommend that its employees not use Ticor for new home counseling and that the city select and provide "adequate resources" for agencies such as the Housing Market, Urban League and Urban Edge to provide "affirmative, non-discriminatory marketing of the city of Hartford and the surrounding towns to American Airlines transferees."

STORY NO. 1 (continued)

Hartford City Council Majority Leader Nicholas R. Carbone said he has instructed City Manager James B. Daken to conduct an investigation to determine the source of the map, and to send the results of the inquiry to the council.

"If someone is steering people away from Hartford, that's outrageous," said Carbone, who has not yet seen a copy of the map. "I think we have to get to the bottom of this".

Daken, who had not received E/I's letter Friday night, said he knew little of the map, except for what he was told by the Urban League. Members of his staff will attend the Urban League's meeting today, and he will be present at part of it, he said.

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STORY NO. 2

PROBE OF MAP DOWNGRADING CITY PROMISED BY OFFICIALS

By J. Greg Robertson

Hartford officials Saturday promised a full investigation into the origins of a map marked to indicate that most of Hartford is not a suitable place to live.

City Councilwoman Olga U. Thompson told representatives of 11 public and private housing and social agencies that City Manager James B. Daken will try to find out who prepared the map and sent it to American Airlines employees planning to move to the area.

After they viewed the map at the Urban League of Greater Hartford office, Mrs. Thompson and three other city counselors discussed with the agency representatives there the wider implications of potential city residents being "steered" to the suburbs. They agreed that the map is only one example of widespread attempts to downgrade the city.

Early in the meeting, Urban League housing director Michael Sharpe described how he obtained the map. Sharpe said he began working in September to help minority group employees of American Airlines relocate in the area. About 100 of the more than 400 airline employees transferred to the new Hartford reservations center on Main Street, are members of minority groups, he said. After talking with the employees, he said, "a certain story kept repeating itself". Minority group employees told him that Tricor Inc., a White Plains, N.Y., firm hired to help employees relocate, was not giving them as much help as it did white employees, he said.

Monday, Sharpe said, a black woman airlines employee told him Ticor had mailed her a map of Hartford with written comments on it. He quoted the woman as saying, "That map suggested that there were certain areas in Hartford that we should stay away from." She told him that she had lost her copy of the map but had a friend who also received one, he said.

The map he displayed at the meeting was a standard Hartford Board of Realtors Multiple Listing Service map of Hartford with the word "No" written in red ink in the Asylum Hill area above a red line bisecting the city along Farmington Avenue. Below Farmington Avenue and above a second east-west line drawn through the middle of the south half of the city was a second red ink comment: "Downtown - Not Considered Appropriate". Across the Wethersfield and West Hartford town lines was printed: "Good Area for Consideration".

"The significance of the map - the diagrams - speak for themselves", said Sharpe.

STORY NO. 2 (continued)

When they were first contacted Friday, Ticor officials denied any knowledge of the maps, but later admitted they had received such maps from the Hartford Realtor office, Sharpe said. The firm said it will conduct its own internal investigation to find out if one of its employees marked the maps, he said.

"We are not in a position to say Ticor prepared this map," Sharpe told the meeting.

Urban League Director William J. Brown said, "I think a heavy emphasis in the investigation has to be to the door of the Hartford Board of Realtors."

Sharpe said Ticor senior officials promised to attend the meeting but were not there, possibly because of the weather.

Ticor officials could not be reached for comment Saturday.

Robert McGinnis, executive vice president of the Greater Hartford Board of Realtors Saturday stated emphatically that no one at his office sent out the altered maps.

"No way did we alter any maps. Whether they are our maps or whether somebody took them and altered them, I don't know, but we didn't do it," McGinnis said.

McGinnis said his group represents about 20 to 25 realtors in Hartford.

"I feel badly about this, but it is preposterous to think we would do it. It would be like going against our own membership," McGinnis said. "We really need this like a hole in the head."

Commenting at the meeting Saturday in Hartford, the Rev. George Welles of the Hartford Human Relations Commission said, "As initially shocked as I am, I'm not surprised. It points to business as usual...This is 99 per cent of the way the whole think (marketing real estate) is done."

Welles said it might be possible to find out which person marked the maps but he said much of the downgrading of the city is done informally, such as at cocktail parties, where it can't be traced.

Patrick Hare, a research associate for the Hartford civil rights organization Education/Instruction Inc. said the city Housing Market and private agencies such as the Urban League can't compete with the large real estate firms to promote the city as a place to live. He called for the city to increase its $10,000 residence publicity fund and for a "permanent watchdog committee" to check charges of "steering" away from the city.

Atty. Charles Mokriski, chairman of the Hartford Housing Authority, said he was not optimistic about solving the negative "steering" problem. He said major area firms should have an "affirmative action marketing program" to make employees aware of city residence options. Other participants commented that Aetna Life and Casualty Co. and Connecticut Bank and Trust Co.

STORY NO. 2 (continued)

have such programs already.

Remedies Cited

Atty. Barry Zitser of the city corporation counsel's office said there are legal remedies if housing discrimination can be proved. "There's no question that the city and all of its residents are invidiously affected by 'redlining" and 'steering'." He said he was attending the meeting at Daken's request to get facts for an investigation.

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STORY NO. 3

AMERICAN WILL GIVE ANSWERS ON MAP TODAY

By Antoinette Martin

American Airlines officials will hold a 10 a.m. press conference today in Hartford to answer questions about a map apparently sent to some of their employees which indicated most of Hartford would not be a suitable place to live when they transfer here.

Also, the firm will provide general information about its new reservations center on Main Street.

American Airlines spokesman Vincent Mudugno Monday would answer no questions about the map, except to say that the company is not investigating the matter but is leaving that up to Ticor Inc. - the firm hired to relocate employees moving to Hartford from other states.

Spokesmen at Ticor's White Plains, N.Y. office made only a brief statement stating the company is "looking into the matter" and believes charges about its possible involvement are groundless because it follows fair housing law.

In Hartford, Michael Sharpe of the Urban League, who originally revealed the existence of the map, kept secret the names of American Airlines employees said to have received the map.

Some of those who did receive the map - marked with red lines and handwriting indicating most of Hartford is unsuitable - may wish to come forward later, Sharpe said.

The Urban League is continuing to investigate, he said.

Meanwhile, City Manager James B. Daken also requested staff to submit a report on the controversy.

Daken said he will ask American Airlines, in a memo, to involve itself in finding out who marked and sent out the map.

The map produced at a Saturday meeting by Sharpe is a standard Hartford Board of Realtors Multiple Listing Service map of the city. The Board of Realtors has denied altering any maps.

City and civil rights spokesmen have said the incident is only one example of a pattern of steering potential residents away from Hartford and efforts to depict city real estate as a poor investment.

STORY NO. 3 (continued)

The American Airlines press conference today will be held at the firm's new office here - the old Korvette's building on Main Street, which has been remodeled to become the nation's largest reservations center.

Four other offices in the northeast are being closed down and persons calling for a reservation from anywhere in the region will be answered by operators in the new Hartford center.

Some state residents have already been hired and trained to work at the reservations center, Mudugno said, but he did not say how many.

Another company spokesman said last week that fewer than the 800 total jobs originally planned will be provided at the center when it opens. The Washington reservations center will remain open longer than was expected, he said, and those employed there won't be asked if they want to transfer until fall, or possibly later.

The Main Street office will open for New York calls Feb. 25, and for calls from other parts of the northeast, in stages over the next few months, spokesmen said.

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STORY NO. 4

URBAN LEAGUE TO HOLD TONGUE IN MATTER OF SOURCE OF MAP

By Michael Regan

The director of the Urban League of Greater Hartford said Tuesday the league will not tell anyone who gave them a map indicating that most of Hartford is unsuitable to home-seekers.

William J. Brown said the source of the map will be kept secret even from law enforcement and regulatory agencies overseeing the real estate industry.

The map allegedly was received nearly a year ago by an American Airline's employee who will be transferred to Hartford to work in the firm's new regional reservations center scheduled to open this month.

According to the Urban League, the map was turned over to them by employees who said it had been sent by Ticor Inc., a relocation firm hired by American.

The map, which was printed for the Greater Hartford Board of Realtors, has hand-written notations including a big red "NO" in the predominately black North Hartford area indicating that the northern two-thirds of the city is unsuitable for persons seeking homes.

League housing director Michael Sharpe said Tuesday he has heard of other maps similarly marked, but has only seen one.

Sharpe said the employees who brought the map to the league said the red notations were on it when it was received from Ticor.

Brown said the league believes "somebody in the Greater Hartford Board of Realtors wrote on that map," even though it reportedly was sent to the American employee by Ticor.

Board of Realtors executive vice president Robert McGinnis said Tuesday he does not believe the board itself supplied the maps Ticor distributed. The maps are printed by the thousands, he said, and available from almost any board member.

Brown said the league is keeping the identity of the employees who brought the map to the league secret to protect their jobs.

He said American has questioned some employees about release of the map, and the league does not want to risk having "economic sanctions" brought against them for bringing to light what Brown called evidence of attempts to "steer" prospective residents away from the city.

STORY NO. 4 (continued)

Brown also rejected a request that he ask the American employees involved if they want to discuss the map with a reporter, anonymously if necessary.

Brown said he would not give the names to the U.S. Department of Justice, which investigates possible violations of fair housing laws, or to any other agency unless subpoenaed.

One investigation of the matter now underway is being conducted by the city, but City Manager James E. Daken said progress has been slow.

"There isn't too much that can be done unless they (the employees) are willing to come forward," he said.

American Airlines does not plan to look into the matter itself. Due to a mix-up in dates, the firm was expected to hold a press conference on their move to the new facility Tuesday, but the session will not be held until Feb. 15.

Even at that meeting, an airline spokesman said Tuesday, the firm does not plan to comment on the map issue.

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STORY NO. 5

ONLY 'ONE' EMPLOYE GOT MAP

By Elissa Papirno

A map terming much of Hartford an unsuitable place to live was sent to only one American Airlines employee in response to that employee's "expressed needs," a New York realty firm said Friday.

Officials of the Urban League of Greater Hartford and Hartford's Education/Instruction had complained when the map surfaced earlier this month that the document was a form of racial steering.

The Ticor Relocation Management Co. of White Plains, N.Y., which had been helping American Airlines employees relocate to Hartford, said the map was sent to one employee in late 1975 to show the "availability" of housing to suit that employee's "expressed needs."

Those needs included location, proximity to transportation, apartment size and the employee's budget limitations, the realty firm said in a report to City Manager Daken.

The realty firm said copies of the map were given by that employee to other employees and friends but that the firm itself produced only one map.

Amy Stillman, Ticor's marketing communications specialist, said although top Ticor officials have not seen the map, they are assuming it is the same map uncovered by Urban League officials earlier this month.

That map had a line drawn on it bisecting the city at Farmington Avenue with the word "no" written in red ink north of the line and a second line delineating "downtown - not considered appropriate."

Across the Wethersfield and West Hartford town lines was written "Good area for consideration."

Urban League and Education/Instruction officials and others concerned about the map had complained it was a form of steering persons away from the city to the suburbs.

But Ticor in its report, prepared by its attorneys, said the relocation counselor who talked with the employee never discussed the suburbs.

Urban League Director William J. Brown said Friday that he was not satisfied with the realty firm's explanation. He said his office knew of at least two copies of the map.

STORY NO. 5 (continued)

"From our sources there's got to be more than one map." Brown said. "I don't believe it's entirely accurate," he said of the report.

Daken said he met with Ticor officials Thursday and will issue a full report and recommendations next Thursday.

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STORY NO. 6

CITY CLOSES PROBE OF HOUSING MAP

By Michael Regan

Hartford City Manager James B. Daken said Thursday that the city's investigation of a controversial housing map has been closed with a report from a New York relocation firm acknowledging that one of its employees issued the map.

At a meeting in City Hall, Daken added that the ending of the investigation does not mean an end to the city's efforts to fight discrimination. He said he would ask the City Council to approve a testing program to combat discrimination in housing sales and rentals.

A report from Ticor Relocation Management Co. of White Plains, N.Y., says the map was issued by one of its employees to an American Airlines employee being relocated to Hartford.

On the map, much of Hartford is marked "no" or "not considered appropriate." The map was the only one of its kind reported.

Officials of the Urban League charged the map was a form of racial steering, but Ticor said its employee had marked the map in response to questions from the American employee on things like housing costs, and sizes, and transportation services.

Since the American employee is black, and the areas marked "good for consideration" are predominately white, use of the map "would have resulted in greater racial integration," Ticor said.

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